

# PROGRESS IN HOUSING BILL: CONSIDERED IN COMMITTEE

## Suggestions and Amendments of Value Made by Liberal Members and Taken Under Ad- visement by Premier—Slim Attendance in House—Proudfoot Urges Standardization

Considerable progress was made yesterday in the Legislature on the Housing Bill. The House spent the afternoon in discussing the measure in Committee of the Whole, and several constructive amendments were made at the suggestion of Opposition members. Other changes which Liberal members felt would strengthen the bill the Prime Minister agreed to take under advisement. There were no drastic changes in the principle of the bill. Sir William Hearst, in answer to questions during the course of the discussion, said the Government had no power to authorize Housing Commissions to investigate alleged exorbitant high prices for building materials. He promised to ascertain if the Government had authority to pass legislation to control house rents.

While the members present yesterday expressed themselves fully on the various clauses of the bill, it will be taken up in committee on another occasion. The Prime Minister agreed to this at the request of the Liberal Leader, Mr. William Proudfoot, as the attendance of members was very poor. Not more than 20 were present on the floor of the House at any one time.

Replying to Mr. J. C. Elliott (West Middlesex), the Prime Minister explained that "company," as referred to in the act, as coming under the Housing Accommodation Act, applied solely to housing companies. The important element in the Housing Accommodation Act was the proviso that housing companies were not allowed to declare a dividend of more than six per cent. The idea was that people going into house building under that act would not be doing so to make money. Such companies might be those formed by philanthropic persons or employers seeking to better the living conditions of their workers. Then, too, a Housing Committee can borrow up to 85 per cent. for the construction of dwellings. Such companies can sell as well as rent the houses they build.

Mr. T. S. Davidson (North Brant) questioned whether it would be wise to allow a municipal Council to pass the by-laws to come in under the act without the consent of the electors.

### No Time for By-laws.

"It is essential to the success of the bill that it should be so," said Sir William. "If a municipality had to wait to submit a by-law it is feared it would not be in a position to take advantage of the bill this year, the houses required would not be provided and the work we want to give would not be supplied. We think the municipalities are so well protected that there is no necessity for the consent of the electors being secured."

Mr. Proudfoot raised the question brought up by Mr. Sam Carter (South Wellington) on the second reading of the bill, that considerable money could be saved by the standardization of all materials, if the Government would do the purchasing of supplies in large quantities. He asked that the bill be not reported until more members were in the House to consider Mr. Carter's proposal.

The Prime Minister replied that there was no intention to rush the bill through and that the request of the Liberal Leader would be complied with. He went on to ex-

plain the Government's position in regard to the proposal. "What the Housing Committee has done is to standardize all plans," he said. "They are distributing information and plans, which are going to be multiplied, so that every municipality will be provided with a wide choice. The idea is that all the important parts of a house will be standardized. The Municipal Director will get prices and check them up to see how materials can be supplied the cheapest, so that there will be a real bureau of information to the municipalities."

Mr. Elliott asked if there were any provision for giving to the Commissions any power to investigate prices, if it were thought a certain trade was charging exorbitantly.

"I don't know that we would have any power to do that," replied Sir William Hearst.

Replying to Mr. J. C. Tolmie (Windsor), the Prime Minister said that there was no intention of permitting a municipality to make any profit on the land.

### Retirement of Commissions.

It was suggested by Mr. Proudfoot that instead of having two members of a Commission of five retire after one year's service, and the remaining three retire after two years' service, it would be well to have one retire each year. He pointed out that this would assure some members being on the Commission continuously who had more than a year's service. Sir William agreed to consider the suggestion.

Mr. F. Wellington Hay (North Perth) asked if the act could not be made to be of greater benefit to the smaller municipalities. He explained that while new houses might not be so urgently needed in small municipalities, some workingmen were purchasing houses and paying high rates of interest on borrowed money. He thought it would be well if the local Commissions would be allowed to advance money to such men at 5 per cent. interest as provided in the bill so as to relieve them of the greater burden.

"The plan outlined by my honorable friend would not come within the regulations laid down by the Dominion Government and we could not apply the money received from that Government in that particular way," replied Sir William. "The idea outlined goes in a different direction than what the bill is aimed at. The present situation is that we have a great dearth of moderately priced houses; conditions are abnormal, so that private capital is not meeting the situation. That is the justification for Governmental action to supply houses to meet the high cost of money and materials at the present time." Sir William went on to say that while a man may be now paying at a higher rate of interest for money in making payments on a house, that man was buying under lower building costs than what prevail at this time.

Mr. Allan Studholme (East Hamilton) pointed out that in Nova Scotia the housing problem was also being taken up and also the question of regulating rents. He wanted to know if the Ontario Government could not do something to regulate rents.

The Prime Minister stated that he could not answer the question at once, but that he would look into it.

### Think \$20 a Month Too Much.

Mr. Davidson doubted if the good the bill was intended to do would